

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 04987 241939Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2022

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 4987

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, ELAB, AR

SUBJECT: LASTIRI RESIGNS--POLITICAL INFIGHTING CONTINUES

REF: 1) SMITH-GAMBLE-ZAMBITO TELCON OF JULY 23

2) BA 4959

1. AFTER A DAY OF INTENSE POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE CONGRESS, THE JUSTICIALIST BLOC CAUCUSED AND VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ASK CHAMBER PRESIDENT RAUL LASTIRI TO RESIGN. LASTIRI, AFTER BEING INFORMED OF THE CAUCUS DECISION, ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY THAT HE WOULD RESIGN--BOTH HIS CHAMBER PRESIDENT POSITION AND HIS SEAT IN THE CHAMBER. HE ASKED FOR 24 HOURS GRACE TO REMOVE HIS EFFECTS FROM HIS OFFICE.

2. TENSIONS WERE HIGH THROUGHOUT THE DAY AS LASTIRI MANEUVERED DESPERATELY TO SAVE HIS POSITION. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE LASTIRI HAD MADE PRIVATE CONTACT WITH 62 ORGANIZATIONS LEADER LORENZO MIGUEL AND OFFERED HIM LARGE ROLE IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING IF HE WOULD RALLY LABOR DEPUTIES TO LASTIRI'S CAUSE. THIS EFFORT COLLAPSED WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT EVEN WITH MIGUEL'S HELP LASTIRI'S POSITION WITHIN CONGRESS COULD NOT BE SALVAGED. TO DATE ONLY PUBLIC HINT OF STRAIN IN LABOR RANKS' ROLE IS PRESS REPORT THAT LABOR WING OF

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 04987 241939Z

JUSTICIALIST BLOC ACTED CONFUSED OVER ITS STAND RE

LASTIRI DURING JULY 22 SUB-BLOC CAUCUS.

3. CONGRESSIONAL PERONISTS ARE REPORTED FURIOUS OVER MIGUEL'S MOVE BUT DOUBTFUL ISSUE WILL BE MADE PUBLIC UNTIL AFTER EFFORT TO "CLEAN OUT" LOPEZ REGISTRAS COMPLETED. THIS INCIDENT ANOTHER INDICATION OF HIGH TOLL POLITICAL STRUGGLE EXACTING IN TERMS OF LABOR'S INTERNAL UNITY.

4. BLOC LEADER PEDRINI WAS ABLE TO SAVE HIS POSITION FOR PRESENT BY VOTING AGAINST LASTIRI AND OFFERING TO CONFRONT HIM WITH PARTY'S DECISION.

5. DURING EVENING OF JULY 23 UCR LEADER BALBIN GAVE INTERVIEW ON BUENOS AIRES TELEVISION STATIONS AND SUGGESTED THAT MRS. PERON COULD USE A LONG REST. ACCORDING TO BALBIN HER CLOSEST ADVISORS HAD BLINDED HER TO TRUE SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY. SHE WAS NOW RECEIVING RUDE SHOCKS IMPOSED BY REALITY OF SITUATION AND NEEDED REST TO FACE COUNTRY'S GRAVE PROBLEMS WITH SERENITY.

COMMENT. RUMORS THAT MRS. PERON MAY ASK FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE VERY SHORTLY CIRCULATE THROUGH COUNTRY WITH MOUNTING INTENSITY. WE CANNOT CONFIRM THESE REPORTS. HOWEVER, IT'S CLEAR HER POLITICAL POSITION RECEIVED FURTHER SEVERE SETBACK WITH OUSTER OF LASTIRI. DEPRIVED OF STRONG SUPPORT PROVIDED BY LOPEZ REGA AND LASTIRI, MRS. PERON'S GOVERNMENT NOW APPEARS RUDDERLESS AS IT PREPARES TO FACE FURTHER POLITICAL CHALLENGES. IN SUM, THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION CONTINUES TO WORSEN AS THE COUNTRY GOES THROUGH A PROFOUND AUTHORITY CRISIS.
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